

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name John Humphrey House

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 115 East Weatogue Street

NA not for publication

city, town Simsbury

x vicinity E. Weatogue

state CT

code CT

county Hartford

code 003

zip code 06070

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- x private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property

- x building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing:

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official John W. Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 10/11/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- x entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain):

entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 11/15/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL/Post medieval English

foundation STONE/Sandstone

walls WOOD/Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John Humphrey House, built c. 1760, is a 2-story frame gable-roofed Colonial building that faces east close to the road in the East Weatogue section of Simsbury. (Photograph 1) The neighborhood is still rural in nature, with the houses well spaced and surrounded in part by open fields. In the five-bay front elevation of the John Humphrey House, 12-over-12 windows are arranged in a 2-1-2 pattern, with central doorway and central chimney. A long one-story ell, perhaps dating from the 18th century, runs to the rear, while a mid-19th century 1½-story wing, set back half the depth of the house, extends to the north. (Photographs 1-4, Figure 1)

The house is covered with clapboards. The plain window trim at the second floor abuts the cornice, which is embellished by mutules. (Photograph 5) Corner boards are plain. The two-leaf front door is set in a molded splayed surround. (Photograph 1) In the south side elevation, two 12-over-12 windows similar to those on the front are evenly spaced at first and second floors under two closely spaced attic windows which have 9-over-6 glazing. A door with a flat cornice adjoins the westerly first-floor window. (Photograph 2)

The rear elevation is covered with wider weather boards. Its fenestration consists of a multi-paned picture window at the first floor and two 12-over-12 windows at the second. The one-story ell, extending back from the north part of the rear elevation, consists of several sections that total a length of 52 feet. The first section jogs out to the south in a glazed bay, then continues under a central chimney to a vertical divider where the floor level drops to grade. A final section under a slightly lower roof line is a garage; its west wall supports an external chimney. (Photographs 3, 4)

On the north side elevation fenestration is similar to that on the south side, except that the door is toward the front rather than the rear. The door has tapered paneled pilasters embellished with incised spiral moldings under a molded cap, indicating it may be an early 19th-century alteration. The rear part of the elevation is obscured by the set-back 1½-story north wing. The wing has three 6-over-6 windows at the first floor and three 3-over-3 windows at the second which are evenly spaced but not centered. As a group, they are off center to the south. A door under plain frieze and cornice fills the space between the first and second windows at the first floor. (Photograph 7) The wing has a central chimney. A one-story ell under cross gable and a low shed complete the wing. (Photographs 1, 4) Foundations of the wing are brownstone ashlar similar to the main block foundations.

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The front door opens to a small stair hall, immediately establishing the existence of the conventional Colonial floor plan of hall in front of the massive central chimney, front rooms on either side, and kitchen in the rear. To the left of the stairway's paneled front there are three risers to a landing, a 90 degree turn in front of the chimney followed by six risers to a landing, and a 90 degree turn toward the front followed by two risers. There are no winders. Under the handrail which has no balusters, is a closed string stopped by square newels at the landings and a turned newel at the bottom. (Photograph 8)

In the paneled fireplace wall of the south front room, the fireplace is flanked by fluted pilasters with rosette capitals. (Photographs 9, 10) The fireplace and its hearth are brick, the mantel and molded surround Colonial Revival. There is a large panel with molded border over the fireplace. A cased summer runs from the fireplace wall to the south wall, while a molded cornice runs around three sides of the room. The dado is made of wide horizontal boards. At the southeast front corner is a corner cupboard with tombstone-shaped opening, panels in its spandrels, and fluting under rosettes, which match similar features in the fireplace wall. (Photograph 11)

In the north front room, the paneled fireplace wall is not as elaborate, while the brick fireplace and hearth are surrounded by bolection molding. (Photograph 13) The summer is similar to that of the south front room, but the dado of the front and rear walls is paneled and that of the north wall is narrow vertical boards. The dado along the north wall, the installation of the door toward the front with embellished exterior surround, and addition of the wing may all have been parts of a single building campaign. In both front rooms the doors to the hall and to the kitchen are three panel.

The kitchen fireplace is brick with rear bake oven and stone hearth. There is no mantel over the wooden lintel, but the wall above the lintel is paneled. (Photograph 14) The floor boards are wide (as they are throughout the house); walls are wide feather-edged vertical boards; and the girts on either side of the fireplace are sheathed. The kitchen is open to the south door, the original partition having been removed, while at the north there is a stair with one riser to a landing, then a 90-degree turn toward the front and a straight run to the second floor. In the ell, wide floor boards continue; the ceiling is exposed rafters without plaster; and there is a small fireplace with bake oven on the front right, indicating it is not as old as the fireplace in the kitchen.

On the second floor, the hall railing has square balusters. The two front rooms are similar to one another with cased corner posts, four-panel doors, and no cornices or dados. Window lintels are at ceiling height. Each room has a small fireplace with plain frieze, flat mantel, and cupboard and adjoining narrow closet door in front of the chimney. (Photograph 15) To the rear of the chimney is a lateral hall which has a similar fireplace, somewhat wider but as shallow, with cupboard above and adjoining narrow door.

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There is a cluster of three fireplaces in the first floor of the wing. The south half of the space is a single room whose fireplace has been bricked up and fitted with an iron stove. The north half of the space is divided laterally; each of the two rooms has a plain fireplace that resembles the second-floor fireplaces of the main block. (Photograph 16, Figure 1) The second floor of the wing is plain.

In the main block, there is a basement under the south front room and kitchen, but not under the north front room. The massive chimney base is solid, without openings. There is a basement under the wing, but not under the ell. In the attic, the roof is framed with common rafters, massive purlins, and diagonal braces. An exterior finish detail is a horizontal water table board placed just above the skirt board over the sill. While primarily decorative, its utilitarian purpose is to serve as a drip cap protecting the skirt board and sill.

The 1½-story barn of weathered vertical siding, dating from 1976, is non-contributing because of its age. (Photograph 17)

A 1936 photograph of the house shows it with an enclosed porch on the south and an enclosed entrance way at the north, in the angle of the ell formed by the house and the wing. Windows were 12-over-1. The front door at this time was a single leaf but it was flanked by small windows glazed in four tiers of two panes, similar to the arrangement at the nearby James Cornish House, 85 East Weatogue Street. A flat molded cornice was several inches above the door. The rehabilitation of the house to its present condition was carried out in the 1970s. The present double-leaf front door, found in the attic, was reinstalled and the added porches removed.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1760

Significant Dates

c. 1760

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

John Humphrey

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The John Humphrey House is significant architecturally because it is a good example of a Colonial structure, well preserved, with an added mid-19th-century wing. The original interior architectural detailing of the first floor, including paneled walls, fluting, rosettes, and three-paneled doors, are finely crafted.

The age of the house, c. 1760, is suggested by the land records and by the presence of a bake oven in the rear wall of the kitchen fireplace. Subsequent to the mid-18th century, the bake oven usually was placed in the more convenient location of the front wall adjoining the fireplace opening, as found in the ell of this house. The three-panel doors also strengthen the mid-18th-century attribution. The presence of a basement under only the south room encourages the conjecture that this may have been an early one-room house. Unfortunately most of the framing supporting the first floor appears to have been replaced, making it impossible to confirm the one-room possibility by examination of the visible framing. The components that make up the existing five-room first floor are consistent with one another, e.g., the fireplace-wall paneling and summers are similar, suggesting that what exists now was all built, or finished, at one time. The front-room fireplaces have been re-bricked; it would be useful to know whether there is a bake oven behind the now-visible south room fireplace. A bake oven there would indicate the cooking function of a one-room house.

The interior wooden finishes are probably the house's finest feature. The two paneled fireplace walls establish the high quality, particularly with the fluting and rosettes of the south room. The repetition of the fluting and rosettes in the corner cupboard presents an ensemble not often found. The wide floor boards throughout, on both the first and second floors, are unusually complete, while the wide horizontal boards of the south room dado and wide feather-edged kitchen wall boards round out the good work.

The presence of the ell with a second kitchen, leading to unfinished space and then a shed, is not unusual for a New England Colonial house. But the mid-19th-century north wing, almost a second residence in itself, is unusual, and is unexplained. There is no record or tradition of the circumstances surrounding this addition. The similarity of the three fireplaces clustered on its first floor to the fireplaces on the second floor of the main block is striking. Second-floor fireplaces usually tend to be less elaborate than their

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ellsworth, Abigail Eno, and Carver, Grace, study of Simsbury Land Records for the John Humphrey House, 1936. At Simsbury Historical Society.

Historic photograph in Historic Simsbury Houses: Fifty Houses Dating from the Colonial Era, 1717-1834. Simsbury: Simsbury Historical Society, 1965.

"Report of the Historic District Study Committee." Simsbury: East Wadsworth Historic District Study Committee, 1987.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 5.1 acres

UTM References

A 18 683000 4636730
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is described at volume 262, page 711, of the Simsbury Land Records.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property boundary is drawn to include land that has gone with the house during the 20th century.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David F. Ransom/Consultant, Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register

organization NA date June 3, 1990 Coordinator

street & number 33 Sunrise Hill Drive telephone 203 521-2518

city or town West Hartford state CT zip code 06107

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first-floor counterparts, but here the similarity of the second-floor and wing fireplace surrounds suggests that they may have been done at about the same time.

The massive stone chimney base in the basement and massive long purlins in the attic are characteristic features of a mid-18th-century house, here represented with impressive examples.

A study of the chain of title was made by a knowledgeable Simsbury antiquarian in 1936. This study gives reason to believe that the land in question may have been part of 20 acres granted to Michael Humphrey as early as 1668, but reasonable evidence of a house being in existence came only at the death of Michael's grandson, Jonn Humphrey, Jr., in 1760; hence, the construction date of c. 1760. Owners of the house during most of the 19th century, when the wing was added, were Oliver Bradley and his son Justin Bradley.

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Photographs were taken by David F. Ransom in May 1990.
Negatives are on file at Connecticut Historical Commission

Photograph 1
View southwest

Photograph 2
View northwest

Photograph 3
View northeast

Photograph 4
View southeast

Photograph 5
Front eaves,
view northwest

Photograph 6
North doorway,
view south

Photograph 7
Wing doorway,
view west

Photograph 8
Front stair,
view southwest

Photograph 9
South front room,
view northeast

Photograph 10
Detail of Photograph 9,
view north

Photograph 11
North front room,
view southeast

Photograph 12
South front room,
view southwest

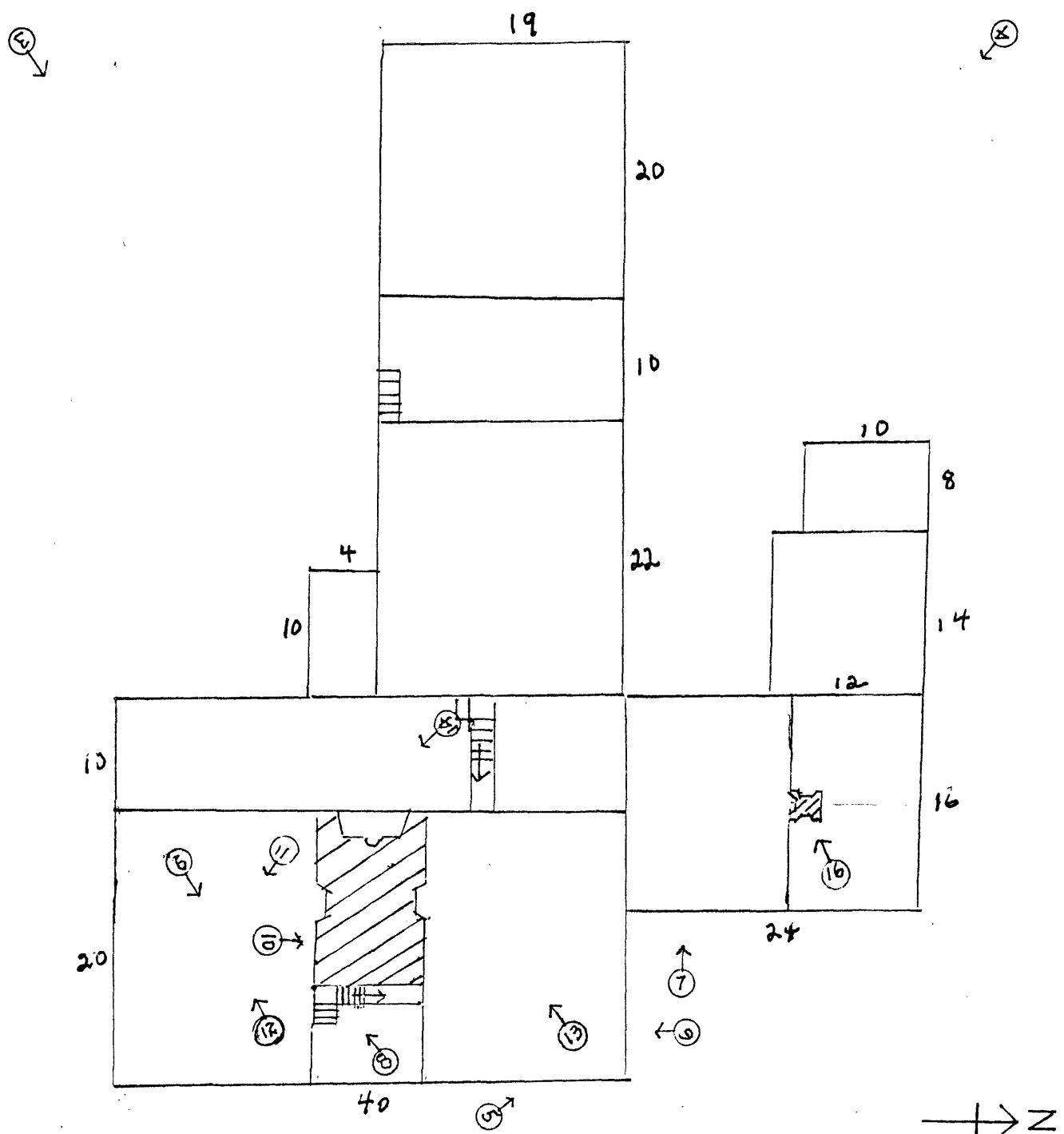
Photograph 13
North front room,
view southwest

Photograph 14
Kitchen,
view southeast

Photograph 15
Second floor,
south front room,
view northeast

Photograph 16
Wing, northeast
room, view south-
west

Photograph 17
Barn,
view northwest



John Humphrey House
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First-floor plan
Photo key

Scale: 1" = 12'

Figure 1